



## Review

### Sacrifice at Pearl Harbor

- **One in the series "Our Century," produced by British Broadcasting Corp., and cablecast December, 1989, on the Arts & Entertainment Network. Written and produced by Roy Davies.**

*Reviewed by William Grimstad*

Pearl Harbor will be Franklin Roosevelt's Watergate. That portentous idea was expressed fourteen years ago in an article by Percy Greaves, a leading historian of the world-wrenching 1941 catastrophe (and member of this journal's Editorial Advisory Committee until his death in 1984). Ironically, the suspicion-shrouded American naval disaster itself now may prove the opening wedge that begins to force historical revisionism into public awareness.

It must have been difficult in 1976 for Greaves to visualize how any significant depreciation of such a major ikon as Roosevelt, who enjoyed immense prestige among numberless millions of Americans in his lifetime, could occur. This past December, however, with the airing of the new television documentary, *Sacrifice at Pearl Harbor*, it now seems at least conceivable that some such process may have begun, bringing with it what appears to be the very first willing and fair-minded televised exposure of World War Two revisionist ideas.

In recent months, we have seen images of immense Josef Stalin bronzes toppled onto muddy streets by angry mobs in Prague and other East European capitals he is supposed to have "liberated." Britain's Winston Churchill, too, has come in for severe castigation in fairly widely read biographical work by David Irving. It remains to be seen not only what is in store for the third and most important of the "Big Three" World War Two leaders, but what any such devaluation might portend for war history, as well as for many bedrock assumptions of the contemporary era.

I believe that the video may profitably be analyzed from several perspectives: as "straight" Pearl Harbor Revisionist history, as a propaganda piece suggestive of shifts beneath the surface of contemporary opinion molding, as a development with possible implications for the "Jewish Holocaust" legend, and finally for philosophical hints we may draw as to how the world we live in really operates.

Actually, a certain Reconstruction of the lofty Rooseveltian reputation already has begun with revelations of his (and his wife's) less-than-sterling moral character and quite active extramarital love life, among other peccadilloes. The closing minutes of *Sacrifice*, however, with their shockingly explicit chastisement of the man in terms of "culpability" for the undefended status of the base, do raise the stakes by an incalculable factor. This inevitably poses the ugly question of treason or even misprision of mass murder of the 2,403 service personnel whom Roosevelt may have allowed to be sacrificed, although it must be stressed that there is no juridical proof of any such intent, only a chain of suspicious circumstances.

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With minor exceptions, Pearl Harbor specialists will find little new ground broken here. The program is based upon John Toland's 1982 *Infamy* and so falls heir to that book's deficiencies as well as its strengths. One gathers that the producers feared going too far, since even Toland has been reviled by some as an extremist.

Whatever their reasons, the scripters studiously ignore the pioneering and truly important Pearl Harbor Revisionists, the men who did all of this spadework decades ago, the men whom the academic-propaganda apparatus still suppresses and clearly fears. George Morgenstern, Harry Elmer Barnes, Charles Callan Tansill, Percy L. Graves, Jr., William L. Neumann, James J. Martin -- none of these names cross their lips. This restricts them to Toland, plus interviews with a number of the surviving military and naval participants.

When they do borrow from one of the pioneers, as for example in their discussion of the U.S. Army's secret radio intercept station on Oahu, which relayed to Washington undeciphered radio traffic of Japanese origin, it is without credit, even though this material was first developed two generations ago in Morgenstern's *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War*.

There are sins of commission as well. Following the Toland model, a great deal of emphasis is laid on a wide variety of people claiming to have become aware of Japanese communications, or at least intentions, before December 7, 1941, and suggesting with full benefit of hindsight that an attack flotilla was definitely known to be en route. These include apparently levelheaded individuals such as ex-Naval Intelligence operative Robert Ogg, who describes U.S. wiretapping of West Coast Japanese officials and the Navy's extensive radio surveillance of the Pacific area. Ogg's view now is that he had "a positive fix on the Japanese fleet" by the first days of December.

Leslie E. Grogan, a radio operator on Matson steamships also is depicted receiving Japanese fleet signals when approaching Hawaii in early December, which he then turned over to Naval Intelligence in Honolulu. However, research in naval archives by Ladislav Farago (published in his *The Broken Seal*), which first disclosed the Grogan intercepts, also concludes that nothing in the records shows radio intercepts of any significance relative to Pearl Harbor before the attack. These men certainly deserve a hearing, but the situation begins to strain credibility when the cameras swing to other figures, particularly Captain Eric Nave of the Australian Navy. The aged Nave makes expansive claims to having "broken" by late 1939 the formidable Japanese naval code, JN-25, which defied all U.S. attempts on it until well after Pearl Harbor. Concurring, the narrator intones that "it was crucial to British Naval Intelligence that every message was intercepted."

Curiously enough, though, if the British were indeed busily decoding all Japanese naval radio traffic two years before Pearl Harbor, the information did them precious little good, as was pointed out by James J. Martin when we viewed the program. In December 1941, the Japanese began blowing the Royal Navy out of the water when they deftly sank its two biggest battleships, the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales*, off Malaya, and sank the aircraft carrier *Hermes* and the cruisers *Cornwall* and *Dorsetshire* off Ceylon in April 1942. Where were the Eric Naves then, as Dr. Marffn asked?

This brings up a persistent tendency that increasingly colors much of the Establishment's endless and seemingly compulsive rehashing of this war, not excepting "Sacrifice at Pearl Harbor." In the publishing industry, one of the largest selling genres has always been cookbooks; however, I wonder if what we might call spookbooks may not be emerging as a serious rival, since these do seem to have become a huge sector of the Anglo-Saxon war-press output.

It has been a long time since the truly great British histories of the war, by B.H. Liddell Hart and J.F.C. Fuller, and what we are left with today are too often grandiose narratives of tide- turning, and conveniently unverifiable, exploits by one superhuman British spymaster after another. Some of that fantasizing seems to have entered in here, possibly as part of an increasingly noticeable "our finest hour" nostalgia.

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One should not belabor such failings, of course, since this is not scholarly history, after all. We should be happy that this long-suppressed material is at last coming out before the mass audience that television commands. Actually, the program does convey at least one important historical point when it notes that General Walter Short, who was in charge of U.S. Army forces at Pearl Harbor, was technically responsible for safety of the naval fleet in port. This fact always has been blurred over by Establishment hack historians trying to prop up the stubborn Roosevelt administration line that the local Navy command was to blame for losses in the raid, rather than politicians and top brass centered around Japanophobic War Secretary Henry L. Stimson and his right-hand man, Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, back in Washington.

Anyone of even cursory familiarity with Pearl Harbor Revisionism will find much of interest, as many of the leading expert witnesses whom one has read of for years are discussed and, when possible, interviewed on camera: among others, Edwin T. Layton, Joseph Rochefort and Ralph Briggs, naval officers who has much to tell about the signals intercept enigma; Joe Leib, the journalist who filed a famous wire story predicting the December 7 attack a week before it happened based, he says, on a briefing from Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and Edward Hanify, longtime defense counsel to the late Admiral H.E. Kimmel, base commander, who had been incriminated by the initial, Roosevelt-staged investigation, although cleared in subsequent inquiries.

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One wonders what might come along next in this series. There would be no shortage of further Pearl Harbor material, omitted or soft-pedaled in this foray:

- The entire matter of Roosevelt-ordered sanctions against Japan, including not only the shipping blockade mentioned here, but also freezing of financial assets, resulting in immediate depression conditions and mass unemployment in Japan, an intolerable provocation that no nation could be expected to endure;
- Material developed by Gordon Prange in his *Tora! Tora! Tora!* indicating that the Japanese attack force had orders to turn back if they found Pearl Harbor defended;
- The November 25, 1941, diary entry by "hawk" Henry Stimson admitting -- incredibly -- that "the question was how we should maneuver them [the Japanese] into the position of firing the first shot without allowing too much danger to ourselves." Plus many other topics.

For now, however, we have more than enough to ponder when a television production aimed at a broad audience can sketch out a new epitaph for the man who, at least among Democratic Party loyalists, has been one of the most fanatically revered political leaders in American history:

For nearly fifty years, one question has been repeatedly asked: did Roosevelt allow Pearl Harbor to happen so that the surprise attack would give him the excuse to take America into the Second World War? The new evidence that has come to light strongly suggests that he did ...

If this program really is a Revisionist "opening wedge" of some sort and not a mere fluke, it might be an occasion for a rather profound meditation as to why so much large-scale falsified history has got written in the first place. One would have to look at

certain aspects of modern urban society, such as the rise of centralized communications media with vast means for censorship and quasi-Pavlovian conditioning in shaping counterfeit consensuses almost to order.

A few perceptive individuals caught the drift of this process early in the game. Senator Burton K. Wheeler of North Dakota memorably denounced Roosevelt's war jockeying in early 1941 as "the New Deal's 'Triple A' foreign policy -- to plow under every fourth American boy." Of great value in any such study would be Charles Lindbergh's *Wartime Journals*, with its fascinating day-to-day record of the amazing administration and mass-media teamwork in gradually swinging around public opinion from staunch noninterventionist to a confused tension in which the Pearl Harbor *coup de théâtre* could detonate a nationwide attitude switch almost in a matter of hours.

Naturally, those of us who have taken interest in the "Holocaust" problem will give close attention to what might be the effect of a discredited Roosevelt on that later and far greater confabulation. The Pearl Harbor trumpery only concludes the explosive overture to a Grand Guignol of WW2 falsification, whose absurdist finale of Jewish immolation continues to be encored in our ears almost a half-century after the supposed event.

Strictly speaking, the future of the Hoax does not stand or fall by the reputation of Roosevelt, who of course is now ungratefully muttered at for "doing nothing about the death camps." Longer term, however, the Holocaust impresarios certainly cannot welcome a queasy climate of public skepticism that this sort of turbulence inevitably fosters. After all, if American war entry can be seen as not only duplicitous but possibly even treasonous, how easy will it be to keep up a proper aura of reverence toward the war's most sanctified episode?

So, the question of why this piece, now, remains and goads curiosity. It is hard to understand jeopardizing the entire jerry-built design of the postwar era by dethroning its chief American architect. Surely Pearl Harbor Revisionism was still safely in the "historical blackout" deepfreeze denounced by Harry Elmer Barnes. One would think that there was everything to lose and nothing to gain by compromising Roosevelt.

In the end, one comes back to observations like Churchill's famous and astoundingly blasé remark about the truth in time of war needing to be protected by "a bodyguard of lies," but then one wonders why the guard would be withdrawn afterward, considering what is at stake. Perhaps there is some greater import to the old proverb that "Lies have long legs," so that, no matter how iron-shackled, they seem eventually to get loose and start destabilizing things.

Philosophers of history might ponder whether we do not need a new research speciality to deal with the peculiarly fraud-ridden and conspiratorial character of this era. Political chicanery has always existed, to be sure: examples abound in American history. One need think only of the high-level conniving that deployed terrorist-murderer John Brown in sparking off an earlier war fever, recently explored by Otto Scott's *The Secret Six*; or the extremely dubious ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment after the Civil War, with such dire consequences in our day. Yet, it does seem that the sleight of hand is reaching ever higher orders of magnitude.

Dare one hope that this program, in its small way, signals some sort of turnaround?

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